

# Livable Places PROFILES

## DOWNTOWN REDLANDS *Redlands, CA*

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA  
ASSOCIATION of GOVERNMENTS

1997

*Downtown Redlands has maintained strong community loyalty from residents and businesses and continues to provide the central focus of civic and cultural life in a city recognized as one of the most livable in the Inland Empire.*



### Redlands Uses Its Historic Buildings To Create Today's Livable Community

*Case Study*  
*Total Acres*  
**60**

*City*  
*Population*  
**67,300**

*Avg. Minimum  
& Maximum  
Temperature*  
**50° → 79°**

**Key Features**  
*Redlands  
Civic Center  
State Street  
Town Center  
Redlands Mall*

**R**edlands is home to the University of Redlands and an active community life. The city has maintained its distinctive character and prosperity by reinvesting in its historic downtown core and directing development to support its central district. Civic landmarks and institutions have been preserved and enhanced, and State Street has been established as an attractive pedestrian-oriented retail and service corridor. Future plans call for extending the compact pattern of development to the freeway interchange to discourage freeway-oriented development.

➤ *The revitalized Phinney Building shows how Redlands has put its past to good use.*





*The 1898 Smiley Library, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was renovated in 1990. The building's Spanish influences are reflected in the solid, yet simple columns and arches.*



*An old-style street light adds to the historical feel of Downtown Redlands.*

## Downtown Redlands

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## Community Participation

Citizen activism has long been a hallmark of Redlands, which prided itself on careful growth management, preserving its historic character and quality of life. During the early 1980's, concerned residents, businesspeople and civic leaders pushed for a new strategy to bolster the downtown area which suffered from a lack of freeway visibility and no coherent connections between the social, cultural and commercial assets of the central city. The Redlands Redevelopment Agency prepared a 1985 conceptual plan that proposed improved pedestrian walkways and a major investment in tree-lined streets, brick walls, benches, antique street lights and facade improvements for local businesses.

## Transportation and Access

State Street, the main retail corridor, was converted to one-way auto-circulation and angle parking to slow traffic and minimize pedestrian/auto conflicts. Mature shade trees and other pedestrian amenities, including a mini-park, make State Street a pleasant place to walk year-round. There is also a trellis that provides a shaded walkway between State Street shopping and the Redlands Mall, overcoming the pedestrian barriers on busy Orange Street and the mall parking lot. Several other streets have been upgraded with pedestrian amenities, including decorative pavement, wrought iron seating benches, drinking fountains and pedestrian-scale lighting.

Public transit provides convenient bus connections locally and regionally. A downtown parking assessment district supports a 200-space parking garage. There are approximately 1,160 public and privately owned spaces in the downtown. Bicycle accommodations are limited to bike racks, but a bike network is under consideration and grants are being pursued to fund additional downtown bicycle facilities.



*A crowd enjoys the sun and the festivities at Redlands Bowl, the city's amphitheater.*

## Mix of Uses

Retail is the largest component of the downtown with nearly one-third of total square footage, concentrated along State Street and in the Redlands Mall. Offices account for just over 10% of the square footage. There is also a rich variety of civic and park facilities, including the City Hall, Post Office, Library, and Redlands Bowl (the civic amphitheater) as well as hotels, theaters, restaurants, and other community facilities and services.

Residential in the downtown consists of historic single-family homes, some of which have been converted to multiple units, although higher-density infill is allowed and encouraged under the downtown specific plan. The downtown is surrounded by well-established low- and medium-density neighborhoods.

## Reasons for Success

The community has maintained its commitment to the downtown as the hub of the city. Community activism and volunteerism bolsters events and institutions in the central city. Activities like Market Night attract thousands of local residents each week. Small merchants provide unique shops and services that build customer loyalty. The history and beauty of the district has been maintained and enhanced.



*The ornate facade of the Redlands Bowl:  
"Without Vision, A People Perish."*



*Redlands blends traditional with new elements.*



*The Redlands farmers' market.*



*The sidewalks are wide and lined with shady trees.*



*The post office: historic architecture, modern sculpture.*



*A mini-park on State Street.*

## Public / Private Investment

Nearly \$10 million in redevelopment funds went toward street and public infrastructure improvements in the downtown area. A facade improvement program leveraged \$70,000 in redevelopment funds with \$210,000 in private capital to upgrade 53 businesses.

## Special Features and Events

There is a weekly Market Night with a Farmer's Market along with entertainment, artists and street vendors that draws an average of 2,000 to 5,000 local residents. The Redlands Bowl has a Summer Music Festival and there are numerous holiday and special events celebrations, including the Redlands Bicycle Classic, the Run Thru Redlands, the Easter Pet and Bike Parade, and the Christmas Parade.

## Future Plans

The Downtown Redlands Specific Plan, adopted in June 1994 and revised in February 1995, envisions the extension of the town center northward toward the I-10 Freeway, maintaining a compact, pedestrian-oriented character. The plan calls for two- and three-story commercial, office and residential buildings in the town center district and services and industrial buildings in the service commercial district. The goal is to provide a prominent gateway from the freeway to the central core without allowing the area to become a freeway-oriented area dominated by the automobile.

## Lessons Learned

Build on history and tradition. People want a sense of belonging. Maintain the aesthetics. Create reasons for people to come downtown: activity centers and special events. Ensure that people feel safe.



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